Societal Bilingualism

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Master’s Course Spring Term: Language & Culture


Course Structure

1. Individual Bilingualism
   - code-switching & code-mixing

2. Societal Bilingualism
   - diglossia, language maintenance, language shift & language death (obsolescence)

Three (prototypical) sociolinguistic situations (Hudson 2002: 2)

1. Standard-with-dialects
2. Societal bilingualism (multilingualism)
3. Diglossia

Bilingualism & diglossia in Wales 1 (Musk 2006b: 79)
Bilingualism & diglossia

**Bilingualism:** “The capacity to make alternate (and sometimes mixed) use of two languages.” (Concise Oxford Companion to the English Language 1998)

“Bilingualism is the use of two (or more) languages in one’s everyday life and not knowing two or more languages equally well and optimally.” (Grosjean 2002: 2)

**Diglossia:** In some speech communities there is “one particular kind of standardization where two varieties of a language exist side by side throughout the community, with each having a definite role to play” (Ferguson 2000 [1959]: 65), one of which is a *superposed* variety, that is, not a primary “native” variety, but one learnt in addition to the native variety.

**Ferguson’s nine criteria for determining diglossia** (2000 [1959])

1. function
2. prestige
3. literary heritage
4. acquisition
5. standardisation
6. stability
7. grammar
8. lexicon
9. phonology

**Ferguson’s four prototypical cases of diglossia** (2000 [1959])

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Situation</th>
<th>'high' variety</th>
<th>'low' variety</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>Classic Arabic</td>
<td>Various regional colloquial varieties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swiss German</td>
<td>Standard German</td>
<td>Swiss German</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haitian</td>
<td>Standard French</td>
<td>Haiti Creole</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greek</td>
<td>Katharévousa</td>
<td>Dhimotiki</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The case of Arabic diglossia (Ferguson 2000 [1959]: 68)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Situation</th>
<th>H</th>
<th>L</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sermon in church or mosque</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructions to servants, waiters, workmen, clerks</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal letter</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speeches in parliament, political speeches</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University lecture</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conversations with family, friends, colleagues</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>News broadcasts</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio 'soap opera'</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspaper editorial, new story, caption on picture</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caption on political cartoon</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poetry</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Folk literature</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fishman’s extension of diglossia (2000 [1967])

- Diglossia: two or more speech communities “united religiously, politically or economically into a single functioning unit” (84)
  - typically an impermeable group boundary between a small H-speaking élite and the L-speaking masses, i.e. bilingualism is not widespread.
  - e.g. French-speaking élites in a number of otherwise non-French-speaking European countries prior to World War I.
- Neither diglossia nor bilingualism - theoretically possible, but perhaps only in small, isolated and undifferentiated speech communities.
  - but since “[a]ll communities seem to have certain ceremonies or pursuits to which access is limited”, this category “tends to be self liquidating.” (87)

Diglossia vs bilingualism 1 (Fishman 2000 [1967])

- Both diglossia and bilingualism - clearly defined or separate functions
  - e.g. Spanish (H) and Guaraní (a typologically unrelated indigenous language) in Paraguay “where almost the entire population speaks both” (83)
- Bilingualism without diglossia - the two languages or varieties lack clearly defined or separate functions
  - may be indicative of “rapid social change, of great social unrest, of widespread abandonment of prior norms before the consolidation of new ones” (85) → prone to be unstable and transitional (87)
  - e.g. industrialisation in the Western world with means of production from one speech community (H) and labour force from another (L) → language shift from L to H

Diglossia vs bilingualism 2 (Fishman 2000 [1967])

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A broad definition of diglossia

**Broad diglossia** is the reservation of highly valued segments of a community's linguistic repertoire (which are not the first to be learned, but are learned later and more consciously, usually through formal education), for situations perceived as more formal and guarded; and the reservation of less highly valued segments (which are learned first with little or no conscious effort), of any degree of linguistic relatedness to the higher valued segments, from stylistic differences to separate languages, for situations perceived as more informal and intimate. (Fasold 1990 [1984]: 53, my highlighting)

Diglossia vs bilingualism 3

**Problems** (Musk 2006b: 74-77)
- Rather than resorting to an apolitical consensus model, conflict and power relations need to be taken seriously.
- Fishman’s portrayal of bilingualism with diglossia as an inherently stable and ideal state is a misconceived political statement. Any model of diglossia needs to acknowledge the political reality of tensions that may arise from an inequitable compartmentalisation of functions for language (or variety) L and H.

Diglossia vs bilingualism 4

**Problems** (Musk 2006b: 74-77)
- Domain analysis needs to accommodate more parameters in order to acknowledge the real choices that bilinguals make and can make in talk-in-interaction (including code-switching and code-mixing).
- The simple binary distinction H vs L cannot capture either the range of possible situations or domains, nor in many cases the languages or language varieties.
  But a formality/intimacy continuum (Fasold 1990 [1984]: 53) is at least one contributory factor which can influence the choice of language(s) or language variety(-ies) in bilingual or multilingual societies.

Diglossia vs bilingualism 5

**The genetic (relatedness) question** – do the languages need to be typologically related for diglossia to pertain?
- **Arguments for:**
  - Diglossia is one (special) kind of societal bilingualism not vice versa (Coulmas 2005: 133)
  - Broad diglossia focusses heavily on the complementary distribution of codes (only one feature of diglossia) (Hudson 2002: 39)
  - Language shift can only normally be H → L, since H is learnt as an additional (non-native) variety
- **Arguments against:**
  - narrow definition runs the risk of concealing the inevitable connections between ‘classic’ diglossia and the other two broad categories
Bilingualism & diglossia in Wales

vernacular: Galle’ nw at least hala  
could they send

literary: Gallent (hwy) o leiaf anfon  
could (they) of least send
They could at least send

plant nw i ysgol Cymrág.  
children their to school Welsh
eu plant (hwy) i ysgol Gymraeg.  
their children (their) to school Welsh
their children to a Welsh school

Language shift

Early model:

Haugen on Norwegian in N. American context (1953: 370ff):

A > Ab > AB > aB > B

A = language of monolingual (Norwegian) minority speech community
Ab = A-dominant bilingualism
AB = balanced bilingualism
aB = B-dominant bilingualism
B = language of monolingual (English) majority speech community

Accounting for language shift/language maintenance

Three categories of accounts (Hyltenstam & Stroud 1996: 568-73)

1. Studies focussing on macro-societal framing conditions
2. Studies focussing on the connections between societal factors, speaker perceptions & actual language practices
3. Studies focussing on speakers’ language competence & the structural (linguistic) consequences

Macro-societal factors 1

Examples of macro-societal factors: migration, industrialisation, language policy and planning, urbanisation (Fasold 1984: 217)

Giles, Bourhis & Taylor (1977) divide contributory factors into three main areas:

1. status
2. demographic factors
3. institutional support  → ethnonlinguistic vitality
   "that which makes a group behave as a distinctive and active collective entity in intergroup situations" (308)
**Macro-societal factors 2**

**Critique of macro-societal models**

They fail to account for the dynamic processes operating between macro and micro levels:

“Socio-structural approaches, however useful for defining macro-factors of change, fail to account for the influence of intervening variables such as the importance of social networks, individual perceptions of the relative ethnolinguistic vitality of groups in contact, and the communication interactions of participants.”

(Hamers & Blanc 2000: 298-299)

**Micro-interactionist perspective** describes bilingual speakers’ use of their linguistic repertoire as one aspect of their communicative competence (Martin-Jones 1989: 107)

- sees speakers as active interlocutors, who are free to make language choices to express particular social and cultural meanings
- may involve attention to minute detail, including code-mixing and code-switching
Susan Gal’s (1979) study of language shift in Oberwart/Felsőr

(on Austrian-Hungarian border) combining three complementary approaches:
1. Examining historical (generational) pattern of language shift to German
2. Observing and audio-recording everyday language practices of limited number of bilingual individuals
3. Interviewing same individuals to uncover values & associations underlying their language practices

Choice of language in Oberwart/Felsőr

(Gal 1979: 135)

Critique of Gal’s study

- leans heavily towards evolutionism; peasantry has no place in modern-day society and is doomed for extinction and with it any associated language (here: Hungarian) (Williams 1992: 116)
- plays up the degree of freedom to choose language as rational beings according to their chosen cultural identity and plays down the operation of inequalities of power (Martin-Jones 1989: 114)

Critique of Gal’s study (cont.)

- indexicality between social identity and language, between ‘peasantness’ and Hungarian, e.g. code-switching among middle-generation bilinguals is a sign of being “committed neither to the peasant nor to the worker way of life” (21)
- states categorically that code-switching mirrors the process of language shift implying that language is normally and ideally monolingual, even in bilingual speech communities (Musk 2006a: 73-74)
Language competence & structural consequences 1

Linguistic perspective - how the social processes operating in situations of language contact & language shift impact on the linguistic resources of a minority language
- convergent innovations - changes analogous with dominant contact language
- divergent innovations - changes not analogous with dominant contact language

Yet both types may be responsive to the presence of a more dominant language (Woolard 1989: 363)

Language competence & structural consequences 2

Nancy Dorian’s (1981) study of language death in East Sutherland (a dialect of Scottish Gaelic) in three coastal fishing villages
Participants divided into three groups according to their language competence (traditional linguistic features present among the older Gaelic speakers):
1. older fluent speakers
2. younger fluent speakers
3. semi-speakers (criteria: conditions of transmission, competence & language use)

Marking of gender in standard written Gaelic

- Initial mutation (lenition with labial or velar stops)
  After the definite article (feminine nouns)
  clach ‘stone’ a’ chlach ‘the stone’
  Adjective following feminine noun
  beag ‘little’ clach beag ‘a little stone’
- Pronoun (feminine pronoun to refer back to a feminine noun)
  Thilig mi a’ chlach agus bhris(t) i
  ‘I threw the stone and it broke’

Deviant (“incorrect”) marking of gender in East Sutherland Gaelic (Dorian 1981: 124-129)

![Graph showing deviation in gender marking]
Conclusions of Dorian’s (1981) study

“There have been no startling departures to report in terms of types of change. [...] But if the types of change are not unusual, it seems possible that the amount of change is.” (151, my highlighting)

Thus her crucial point is that “change in six rather prominent categories of the nominal and verbal grammar” taking place at about the same time may be symptomatic of language death (152, my highlighting)

Nevertheless, “sociolinguistic factors, rather than purely linguistic features, distinguish change in dying languages from change in healthy languages.” (154, my highlighting)

Bibliography 1


Bibliography 2


Bibliography 3


